



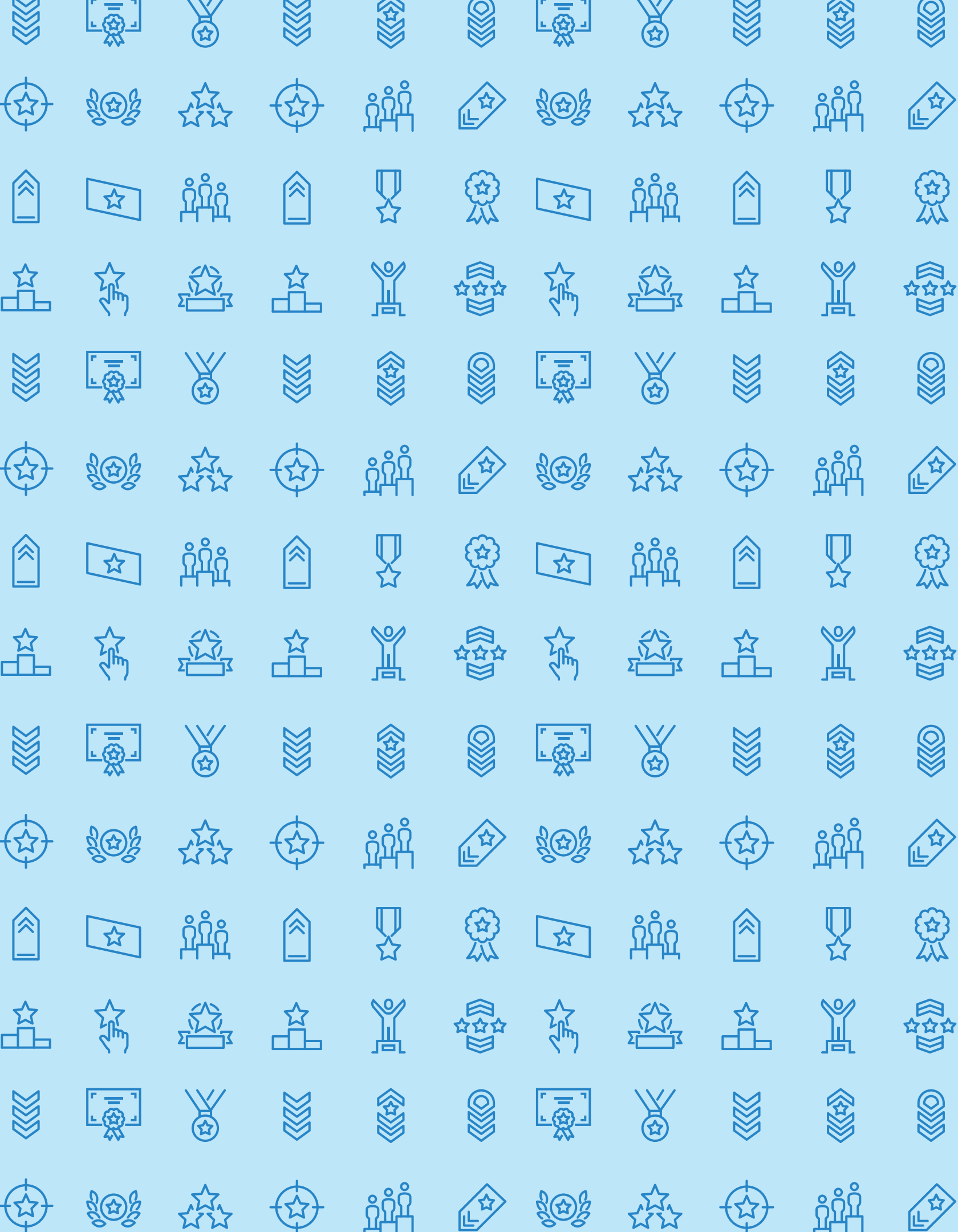
# TAKE ACTION TOOLKIT

Help Military Spouse Professionals  
Succeed in Your Community

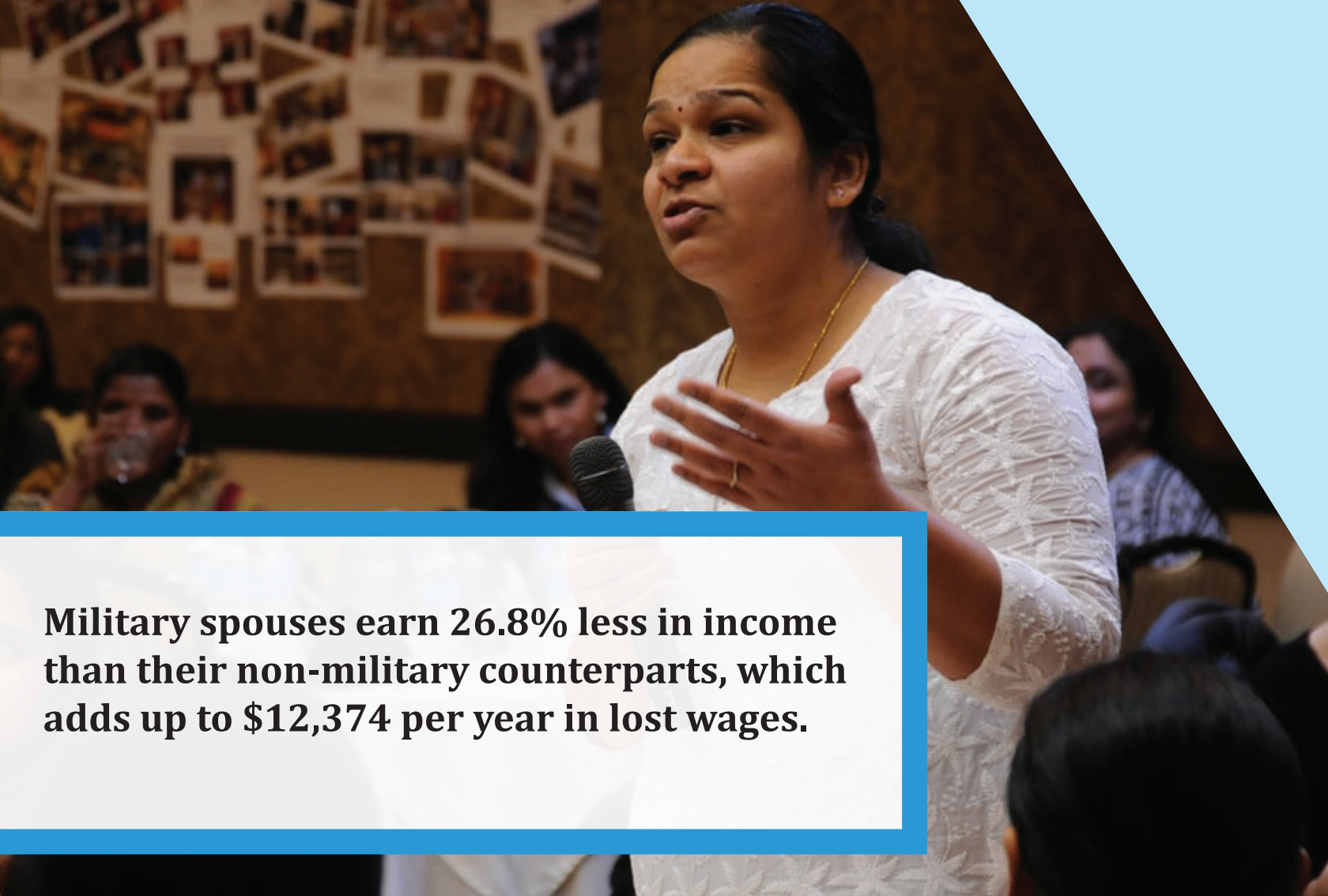


**NATIONAL  
MILITARY FAMILY  
ASSOCIATION**

**For Leaders and Policymakers**





A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white lace top and a gold necklace, is speaking into a microphone. She is gesturing with her hands. In the background, there is a large collage of many small photographs pinned to a wall. Other people are visible in the background, some looking towards the speaker.

**Military spouses earn 26.8% less in income than their non-military counterparts, which adds up to \$12,374 per year in lost wages.**

On average, military families move every 2-3 years. For professional military spouses working in occupations and career fields requiring a license or certification, moving to a new state requires time, money, and patience as they try to transfer their licenses. Sometimes, these military spouses even have to relicense altogether.

**As they do, their careers are put on hold and their family incomes are diminished.**

**This is a problem.**

Despite many legislative and grassroots efforts, the time-consuming and expensive upkeep of professional licensure and certification remains a barrier for working military spouses everywhere.

At the National Military Family Association (NMFA), we champion these military spouses with support, resources, and advocacy on their behalf. But our nation's military spouses need your help to make the process easier.



“I’ve been taking pay cuts with every move since my 4th year of teaching. Vested nowhere for retirement.”

Sara S., Teacher and military spouse



## Military Spouse Professionals At-a-Glance

While every military spouse’s situation is unique, most military spouse professionals will fall into one of the categories below at some time during their family’s military service. Many don’t find it easier in any one category, and none are ideal.

### 1. The Unemployed Or Underemployed Spouse

They are licensed or certified in a particular occupation but have not been able to find a job using their credentials, or they are working in a job not directly using their credentials.

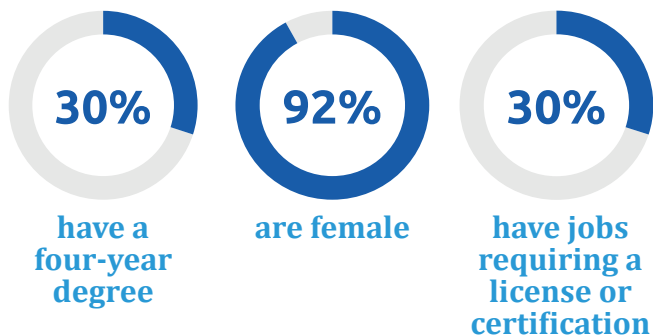
### 2. First Time License Or Certification Spouse

This spouse has never been licensed in their profession and is going through the application process to obtain credentials for the first time.

### 3. The PCS Transfer Spouse

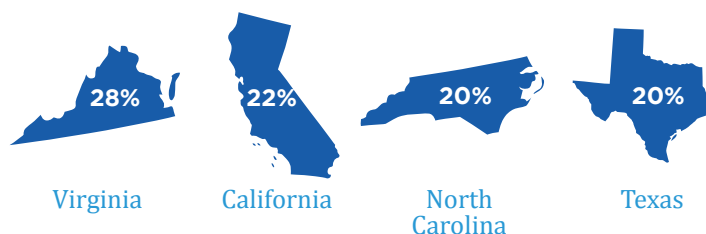
They have been credentialed in their field, possibly worked in their field for multiple years, and now are moving due to their military member’s Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders. They may or may not have been through the process of transferring their credentials before, but they know that every move is different, and they cannot depend on the process being timely, affordable, or simple.

## Military Spouses By The Numbers

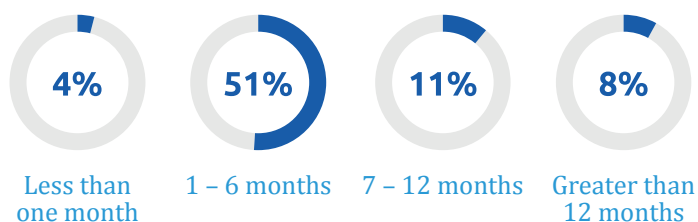


**We surveyed NMFA's Military Spouse Scholarship recipients to see how they view their occupational licensing experience. Here's what they said:**

**Most are currently licensed or trying to license in:**



**Average time it took to relicense, transfer, or renew a credential**



“Licensing in California was extremely frustrating. The board states military spouse licenses are expedited but does not give a time frame for how quickly the expedited license should take. The process was overall so anxiety inducing. It creates unnecessary employment gaps while waiting for licensure and affects nurses and their family's financial wellbeing. Something needs to be done.”

Keri W., Nurse + Military Spouse

“We've moved four times, I was underemployed in three because it was difficult to navigate the license transfer process, and no one could help. I'm working on licensing in my second state, but they are making me jump through hoops and I'm running out of steam.”

Alexis R., Teacher + Military Spouse



26% of NMFA Scholarship Recipients said their new state did NOT provide resources or information to help them renew or transfer their license or certification.





# Relicensing is a Barrier for Working Military Spouses

Military families move on average every two to three years, and they don't get to choose where they're going. Because of these frequent military moves and the unique challenges of military life, military spouses face huge obstacles maintaining meaningful careers in occupations requiring licensure. The result? Time gaps and employment lapses on their resumes.

**Of the 276,000 military spouses in the workforce, more than 30% work in fields that require a state-based professional license or certification to practice.**

These credentials are rarely transferable when a professional moves from state to state. Through both grassroots efforts and formal legislative efforts, military spouses have tried to change that, but these time-consuming and expensive licenses and certifications stand between many military spouses and their careers.

## Why Relicensing Is A Problem



### It's Time-Consuming

The process for a spouse to stay current with professional credentials is daunting: researching a new state's eligibility and other requirements, studying for and taking tests to obtain a new license (then waiting for results), and taking additional required courses before being eligible to apply for a license.

Military spouses earn 26.8% less in income than their non-military counterparts, which adds up to \$12,374 per year in lost wages. These licensing and credentialing barriers keep military spouses out of the job market longer and negatively affect future employment.

# Interstate Compacts Provide (Some) Relief

Occupational interstate compacts offer some relief. These agreements between professional associations, occupational licensing boards, and other state boards are designed to ease the burden on transient professionals, like military spouses, who want to stay employed even after a required military move across state lines.

Interstate compacts allow a military spouse with an occupational license or certification in one compact state to practice in another participating state through “privilege to practice” policies.

**States can voluntarily sign onto each compact to allow spouses to take advantage of the state-to-state reciprocity.**

**That’s where you come in.**

Currently, there are only a few occupational interstate reciprocity compacts, but more are on the horizon — which is good news for the large number of military spouses ready to go to work in your state.

Military spouses work in fields ranging from veterinary medicine to real estate and law. If there were more compacts in place to cover this multitude of career fields, thousands more military spouses would be able to move to a new duty station with their service member and, with reduced barriers to employment, they could start contributing to your local economy and community right away.

**Has your state joined each of these compacts? If not, it’s critical that you do. Simplifying license transferability for military spouses is a simple way your state can show its pride and gratitude for the great sacrifice they make for our nation.**

## Why Relicensing Is A Problem



### It’s Expensive

The barriers military spouses face trying to obtain a new license or certification in each new state not only damage the spouse’s long-term career and professional goals, they also erode the overall financial stability of the entire family as the second income is jeopardized.

Costly fees associated with additional courses, renewing, testing, and transferring professional licenses and certifications range from hundreds to thousands of dollars — costs impossible for military families to routinely bear.



# Current Occupational Interstate Compacts



Physical  
Therapy  
Licensure  
Compact



Enhanced  
Nursing  
Licensure  
Compact



Interstate Compact  
for EMS



Interstate Medical  
Licensure Compact



Interjurisdictional  
Compact for  
Psychology



Advance  
Practice RN  
Compact



Audiology &  
Speech Language  
Pathology Compact

For a compact to become active, a number of states must agree to join. Without the collaboration and agreement of multiple states, the careers of military spouses will continue to suffer along with the overall financial health of their military family. You can change that:

**Rally behind America's military spouses and work to have your state join as many interstate compacts as possible. When you do, you're not just supporting military families — you're supporting your local economy, too.**



## Stories from the Front Lines

At NMFA, we've got boots on the ground in military communities around the world and hear first hand from spouses just how difficult the licensing and transferring process can be for some.



# What Spouses Are Saying

I held a professional teaching license in Washington state with a Master's degree before marrying a Marine. Since then, we have moved 7 times and it has been nearly impossible to even attempt recertification in each state, and it was very costly to jump through all the hoops. I sadly had to walk away from teaching due to this. Now my certificates are since expired and have a huge hill to climb to get back to where I was after my Marine retires.

Jenny M., Teacher + Military Spouse

I'm currently unemployed. My license is still in the last state we lived in; we aren't going to be here long, so I didn't bother to try to transfer it. I was underemployed for my last job. I have two Master's and worked in a position that only required a Bachelor degree

Kristin R., Mental health professional

I've had to navigate compact vs. noncompact states, getting licensed in Guam, dealing with discrimination in hiring practices for being a military spouse, and not being able to maintain employment/being underemployed due to my spouse's increased demand at work and deployments, and not having childcare options.

Meara O., Nurse

"All I ever wished was to be able to have a simplified way for military spouses to carry their certification from state to state."

Jenny M., Educator

As the spouse of an Army officer, we have moved seven times. I was making six figures before any of those moves, and now I'm unemployed and looking for a position in our new area. On top of the immediate and retirement financial impact, it is difficult mentally and emotionally having to continuously start over at each duty station.

Laura T., Consultant



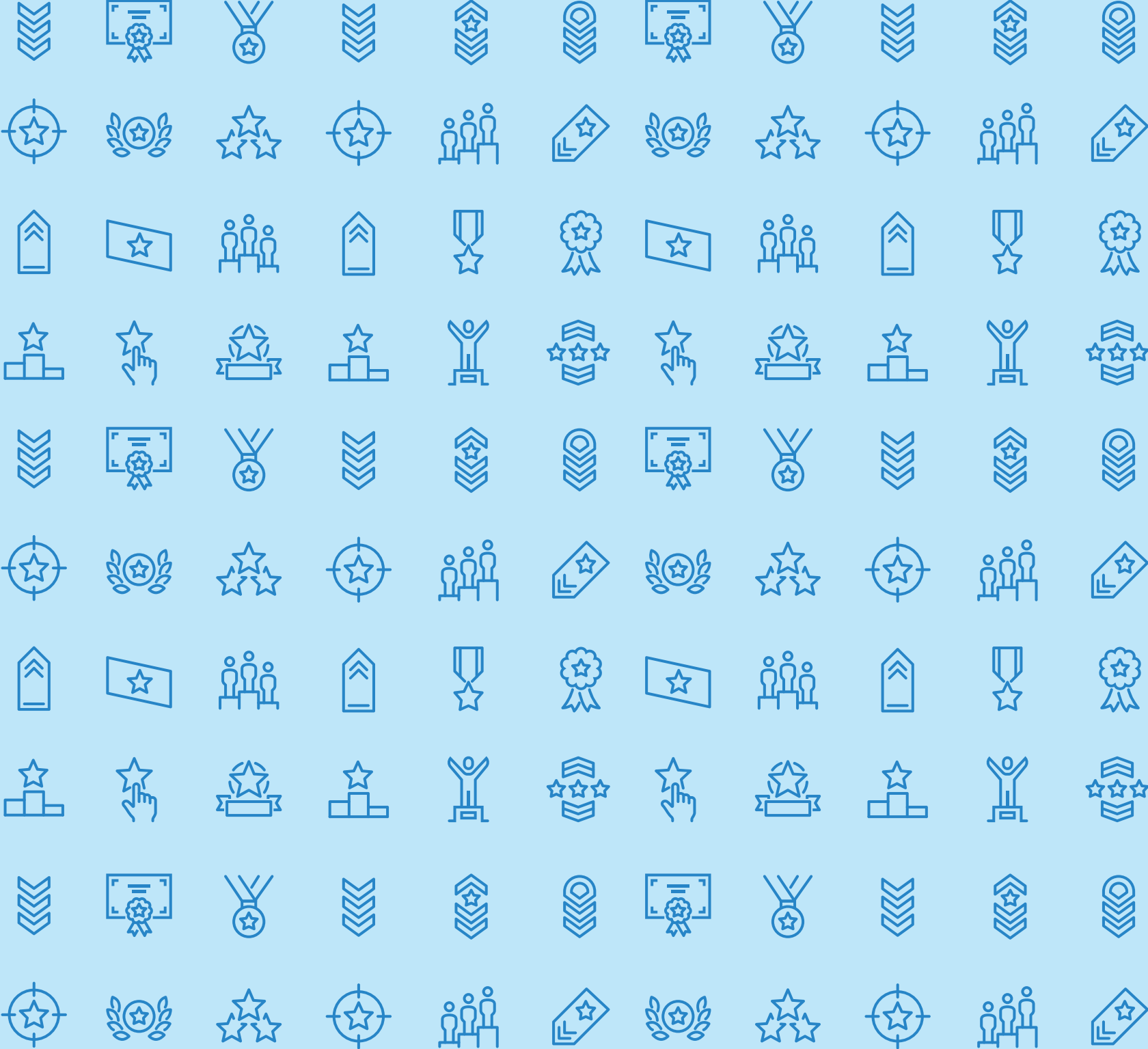
## Help Change the Game for Military Spouse Professionals

Military life is hard enough. Having a meaningful career shouldn't have to be.

Military spouses need your help. Will you join us in creating valuable solutions for the loved ones of our nation's military force? They protect us, let's protect them.

Want to know more? Let us connect you with military spouses in your community and spouse employment experts who specialize in understanding the issues surrounding military spouse employment and occupational licensure.





# CONTACT US

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